



IRISH 1798 COLLECTION



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ARTHUR O'CONNOR'S

L E T T E R

TO

LORD CASTLEREAGH.

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On Wednesday, the 16th instant, Mr. Justice Swan, accompanied by a number of English militia, paid a domiciliary visit to Kilmainham Prison, at day break, as we suppose, on information that Arthur O'Connor was writing a statement of Lord Castlereagh's conduct. Mr. Swan, after a most minute examination of Arthur O'Connor's most private concerns, took away the following letter to Lord Castlereagh—orders were immediately issued for straitening his imprisonment to the closest possible confinement — some of the prisoners have been loaded with bolts and irons, but whether Arthur O'Connor be ironed or not, we cannot determine, as he has been separated from his fellow-prisoners, and as he is not let out of the cell in which he is imprisoned, even to take a moment's air or exercise, since this letter has come into his Lordship's possession.

ARTHUR O'CONNOR'S

L E T T E R

TO

LORD CASTLEREAGH.

MY LORD,

WHEN it is considered that five months have elapsed, since you undertook to pledge the faith and honor of Lord Cornwallis's administration, in a transaction, which it shall be the business of this letter to explain, it cannot be imputed to me, that I have been actuated by any unmanly impatience under the insults, the injuries, and the calumnies to which your dishonourable conduct, for a time, has exposed me, or that what I shall say has been the result of passion and not of the most mature deliberation. I shall first state the transaction, in the order in which it has happened, and then draw such conclusions and offer such remarks, as will place your conduct in such points of view, as that they that run may read. I will not lose time in ascertaining how or from whom the idea of proposing

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terms for saving the lives of Bond and Byrne originated; it was a circumstance of which I had no knowledge. On the 24th of July last, Mr. Dobbs and the Sheriff entered my prison with a written paper, signed by seventy state prisoners, purposing “to give such information as was in their power of arms, ammunition, and schemes of warfare,” (of which it is now manifest they knew little or nothing) “and to consent to leave Ireland, provided the lives of Bond and Byrne, (both under sentence of death) should be spared.” I refused to sign it, not only from a detestation of entering into any conditions with those, who composed the councils of Lord Cornwallis’s administration, but because in the massacre of my unarmed countrymen still raging, I did not think that any object, which was not general, could warrant me, in whom such confidence was placed by so many millions of my countrymen, to enter into any such compact, and because the possibility of its being attributed to a desire to save my own life, in the peculiar situation I stood in, was in my mind an insuperable objection, if there had been no other. Besides, it seemed to me that to save the lives of Bond and Byrne, enough had signed their self-sacrifice to induce the ministers, already sated with blood (as you and Lord Clare appeared to be when we met) to acquiesce; but in this I was deceived, a council sat on the fate of Byrne—he was executed. In this barter of blood, although you had lessened your quantum by half, yet you raised your demands for the price of the other, and proposed to those who had signed the

paper,

paper, *that they should deliver up names.* The heroism and utter contempt, with which so many thousands of my brave countrymen had met death in preference to life, and those profuse rewards they were pressed to accept to betray their associates, and the unparalleled fortitude with which they endured the most excruciating tortures, not only at *Beresford's riding-house, Sandys's-prevot, the old custom-house, and the royal-exchange,* but these torturings and lashings, which resounded in every hamlet throughout the nation, rather than violate the principles to which they had sworn, should have deterred you from offering a proposition so truly dishonourable. You may enjoy all the satisfaction your heart can reap from being the author of such a proposal, whilst the expression of the contempt and abhorrence, with which it was rejected, rests with those to whom you proposed it. * Immediately after this base proposition had been retracted, on the eve of Bond's execution, (a beloved friend, whom I myself had brought into the undertaking) surrounded with the horrors of a charnel-house, where, day after day, I had seen the companions and friends of my heart dragged before some tribunal or other, "*from whose bourn no traveller returns,*" whilst not an hour that was not the messenger of some direful disasters, where my countrymen without leaders, ammunition or arms, continued the victims. Thus environed with horrors, it was intimated to me, that at the council, which had sat on the fate of Byrne, the parties had been nearly ballanced, those who were fated with the

blood that had flowed and those that were not; that the latter, who had been triumphant in the case of Byrne, had made my consenting to sacrifice myself a sine qua non, and that my compliance would incline the ballance in favour of the party, which had declared against shedding more blood, of which party Lord Cornwallis was not only the head, but that he was the father of this sentiment to which a part of the council now professed to be converts. How far this intimation was fact it was impossible for me to ascertain; but whether I considered the extent and value of the object, in putting a stop to that indiscriminate massacre of a disarmed people, the truth of which, though not the extent, has been so fully proved by some of those enquiries which have been made by Lord Cornwallis, so much to his credit; or whether I considered it as affording my countrymen an opportunity to make their retreat from an effort, not worse conducted than it had been unwisely concerted, as putting a stop to those horrible tortures, so universally practised to extort confessions, it appeared to me as holding out advantages too considerable for my beloved countrymen, to authorize me, in the first instance, to decline holding an interview with the Irish government, to try how far any sacrifice I could make, consistent with honor, could enable me to obtain objects so devoutly to be wished. With this view, I yielded to the solicitations, which were made to me, to undertake to make terms for the country with those, in whose hands the government was vested; I consented to meet you for this purpose,

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but foreseeing that the misrepresentations and falshood which have been practised, would be attempted, I expressly stipulated, that some men upon whose honor I could rely, should accompany me—Emmet and M^cNeven were accordingly joined with me, upon the part of the state prisoners.—A short time after we had been in one of the lower apartments in the castle, you entered, when I accosted you, with stipulating that we should have the right of publishing, in order to secure us from calumny, you then requested that we would consent to the Chancellor's being present; Mr. Cooke made a third on the part of government, as I suppose in his official capacity. When we were all assembled, the first demand I made was, "that I might not be required to sign any conditions with the Irish government; but that I might be brought to trial upon whatever evidence could be produced against me, and that whatever quarter government might give to a disarmed people, might be granted without forcing me to sacrifice myself for an equivalent." *This you would not assent to*, which convinced me that it was pre-determined, as I had been informed, that my devoting myself was made a sine qua non, and that without it, the system of blood would still be triumphant. I told you, you had no evidence whatsoever against me, *which you did not deny*. Having put it beyond doubt, that a regard for self or for life had no share in the part I was now forced to adopt; to save the blood of my countrymen, and that I was throwing myself between them and the persecution to which they still
were

were a prey, my next concern was to make the terms as wide as I could. To this end, I observed that as the information I should condition to give might be made a subject for grounding a charge of constructive treason against the whole Union, as had been attempted so widely in England, I could not consent to give any information whatever, unless I was assured that no more blood should be shed for any thing that had passed in the Union. The Chancellor affirmed that constructive treason was law, and that if his advice had been followed, every member of the Union would have been prosecuted for treason; to which I replied that he must have prosecuted the people of Ireland to extermination, as nearly the whole population was of the Union, against which he was to draw his bill of indictment; a fact from which neither you nor the Chancellor could withhold your assent. In answer to my demand of an amnesty, you assured me that Government would not shed any more blood, for any act hitherto done in the Union, except for murder, which you did not suppose I would wish to have excepted; but that though you would assure me that no more blood should be shed, you would not consent that we should have any part of the credit. Convinced from every information we had obtained, that the murders which had been committed upon the people were beyond all comparison more numerous, than those which had been committed by them and being equally abhorrent of murder be the perpetrators of what side they may, we assured you that we were desirous that murderers of no side should

should receive any quarter; and as to the credit of putting a stop to the farther effusion of the blood of my countrymen, I did not contend for what you called the credit, I contended only for that performance for which we were to give the equivalent. You then asked if it was to be understood that the information we might give, in consequence of the agreement into which we were going to enter, was to be given as ours, or whether we would insist on its being given generally, without specifying by whom it was given; to this we answered that we insisted on the right of publishing the whole of whatever information we might give, whether verbal or written (a right I had set out with securing) specifying particularly that if any calumnies or misrepresentations should be published against us, we should be free to refute them. Having done all in my power to procure a trial, and to avoid entering into any conditions with the Government, having put it beyond all doubt that what they called their mercy, was to be purchased at my expence, I desired to see Lord Cornwallis, on whose character as a man of strict honor we relied for the religious fulfilment of the conditions. This you evaded, assuring me that it was of no consequence how loosely the agreement was worded; that Lord Cornwallis's honor was pledged to us for the religious performance; and Lord Clare made use of these remarkable expressions, "It comes to this, either you must trust the Government or it must trust you—a Government which could violate engagements thus solemnly made, neither could stand nor deserved to stand";

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whilst you followed up his declaration with the strongest assurances, that the whole of what had been agreed to, should be observed on the part of the Government, with the greatest liberality and good faith. Thinking it was impossible that such solemn assurances could be made, to be so soon and so grossly violated, and seeing how difficult it would be, to reduce the whole of the conditions to writing, so as to express all our stipulations, without making it appear what title you had to the *credit* you claimed, for stopping the effusion of blood, which was the great object for which I had devoted myself; leaving the stipulations to the religious observance, liberal construction and good faith to which you had so solemnly pledged Lord Cornwallis's honor, the following was drawn up. “ That
 “ the undersigned state prisoners, in the three pri-
 “ sons of Newgate, Kilmainham, and Bridewell,
 “ engage to give every information in their power,
 “ of the whole of the internal transactions of the
 “ United Irishmen, and that each of the prisoners
 “ shall give detailed information of every transac-
 “ tion, that has passed between the United Irish-
 “ men and foreign states; but that the prisoners are
 “ not, by naming or describing, to implicate any
 “ person whatever, and that they are ready to emi-
 “ grate to such country as shall be agreed on be-
 “ tween them and government, and give security
 “ not to return to this country without the permis-
 “ sion of government, and not to pass into an
 “ enemy's country, if on their so doing they are

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“ to be freed from prosecution, and also Mr.
 “ Oliver Bond be permitted to take the benefit of
 “ this proposal. The state prisoners also hope that
 “ the benefit of this proposal may be extended to
 “ such persons in custody, or not in custody, as may
 “ choose to benefit by it.”

29th July, 1798.

Signed by 73 persons.

The last sentence was added, to mark that more was conditioned for than could be expressed. Pursuant to this agreement, at the instance of government, EMMET, M'NEVIN and I drew up a memoir containing thirty-six pages, giving an account of the origin, principles, conduct, and views of the Union, which we signed and delivered to you on the 4th of last August. On the 6th Mr. Cooke came to our prison, and after acknowledging that the memoir was a perfect performance of our agreement, he told us that Lord Cornwallis had read it, but, as it was a vindication of the Union, and a condemnation of the ministers, the government, and legislature of Ireland, he could not receive it, and therefore he wished we would alter it; we declared we would not change one letter, it was all true, and it was the truth we stood pledged to deliver. He then asked us if government should publish such parts only as might suit them, whether we would refrain from publishing the memoir entire; we answered, that having stipulated for the liberty of publication, we would use that right when, and as we should feel ourselves called on; to which he added, that if we published, he would

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have to hire persons to answer us, that then he supposed we would reply, by which a paper war would be carried on without end between us and the government. Finding that we would not suffer the memoir to be garbled, and that the literary contest between us and these hirelings was not likely to turn out to your credit, it was determined to examine us before the *secret* committees, whereby a more compleat selection might be made out of the memoir, and all the objectionable truths, with which it was observed it abounded, might be suppressed. For the present I shall only remark that of one hundred pages, to which the whole of the information I gave to the government and to the secret committees amounts, *only one page has been published*. After the reports were nearly finished, M^rNEVIN asked you on the 11th of August, if you were convinced that we had fulfilled our part of the conditions, you acknowledged that we had most fully, he then requested that you would perform your part; you replied that no time should be lost, and that you would be glad to have a conversation with us to adjust the manner in which it should be carried into effect, but having neglected to call, M^rNEVIN wrote you the following letter:—

“ MY LORD,

“ However anxious my fellow-prisoners and myself are to be relieved from our present disagreeable situation, we have forborne to trouble government with it, until the committees should have reported or we have been examined; but as the season

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son is advancing, and that we shall want some time to settle our affairs, I am desired by my companions, and encouraged by your Lordship's obliging offer on Saturday, of a conversation on the subject, to request you would do us the honor of naming for that purpose, the earliest time that may be convenient to you.

I have the honor to be, &c. &c. &c.

17th August, 1798.

WM. J. M. NEVIN.

The day following Mr. Secretary Cooke came to our prison, and told us he came on the part of government to fulfil their agreement, with the good faith and liberal construction they were pledged to, that we were at liberty to go where we pleased, provided we left the British dominions—that whatever parts of the conditions concerned us after our having passed into exile, would be secured by act of parliament—that therefore, the only part which remained to be settled, was the nature of the accommodation we should require, to enable us to dispose of our property prior to our departure. Here was a full and unequivocal declaration of the conditions, for the performance of which you had pledged Lord Cornwallis's honor, delivered to us by Mr. Secretary Cooke in his official capacity, one of those who was present when the agreement was made, and now sent expressly by you to define it. Immediately after the committees had reported, but before their reports had been printed, the newspapers, (notoriously by their own declaration under your absolute dominion,) inserted the most

impudent falsehoods, with respect to what we had sworn, and in many respects they went even farther than the reports. As to the reports however, we could have waited until we had read them, and then we would have published the whole of what we had delivered, leaving the world to judge how far the facts we had stated, or those vouched for by the committees, were most worthy of credit. We published a contradiction of those scurrilous falsehoods, which appeared in the newspapers, adding that by our agreement, *we were not by naming, or describing, to implicate any person whatever.* The manner in which this was taken up by those men who sat in the House of Commons of Ireland, is upon record, and will form a precious morcel for the future historian of that illustrious body; I am not now writing their history, I am detailing your conduct. Conscious as you must have been, that in contradicting those infamous falsehoods, we were doing no more than exercising a right, for which we had strictly conditioned, why did you not come forward in that fair and honorable manner, to which a regard for truth, for the house, and for your own honor, so imperiously bound you, and avow the existence of your stipulations with us for publication, and of our written agreement, somewhat of which on the second day, the House learnt from its being published by General Nugent, at Belfast? You did neither one thing nor the other; but you did that, which convinced the discerning part of the world, that there was something which you dare not avow, nor yet dare disclaim;

claim ; but although you had neither the spirit or honor to defend your own stipulations, you had the meanness to censure, and to fill up the measure of the perfidious part you had acted, you sent one of those very men to my prison, whose hands were reeking with the blood of my beloved, valued, ***** friend, Edward's precious blood, for which, in those times of stalking butchery, not even the semblance of an inquisition has been had. This was the Mute you sent with orders to circumscribe my prison to the still narrower limits of a cell. For two months, these orders were varied with the most fantastical absurdity ; but all with a view to make a prison more irksome, adding wanton cruelty to the basest perfidy. The next act, which followed close on the heels of this, was your declaration that you had reserved a power to detain us during the war ; a power not only repugnant to the wording of the written agreement, loosely as it was drawn, but to the interpretation you yourself had so lately given by Mr. Cooke ; a power which was a direct violation of that liberal construction and good faith, so often, and so solemnly promised. As Mr. Cooke had been the bearer, a few days before, of the real conditions, a fresh character was thought necessary ; accordingly Mr. Marsden was the messenger of this gross infraction of all that had gone before. Having now passed all bounds of honor and truth, no wonder you should shudder at publication ; a bill was to be brought into Parliament, said to be conformable to an agreement, which, according to Lord Clare, " a government that

that could violate, neither could stand nor deserved to stand." You are the minister, who furnished the facts to the Parliament; and if gross and palpable falsehoods have been delivered, you are that minister, who has dared to deceive them. It is asserted in this bill, in which I find my name in company with eighty-nine others, "that I had confessed myself conscious of flagrant and enormous guilt, expressed contrition, and humbly implored mercy, on condition of being transported, banished, or exiled to such foreign country, as to his Majesty, in his royal wisdom, shall seem meet." On reading this bill, shortly after it was brought into the House, not one of the ninety, whose names are inserted, that was not astonished at these unfounded assertions; and before it was passed, Neilson wrote the following letter to the editor of the Courier:

"SIR,

"Having seen in your paper of the 16th inst a publication, purporting to be a copy of the bill now in its way through the Irish Parliament, relative to the emigration of ninety persons in custody, under charges of high treason, which states that they had acknowledged their *crimes*, retracted their *opinions*, and *implored pardon*, I thought myself peculiarly called upon to set you right, by inclosing to you a copy of the compact, as settled between us and the government, which cannot by any means authorise such a statement; none of us, so far as I know, did either acknowledge a crime,
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retract an opinion, or implore pardon—our object was to stop an effusion of blood.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient, humble, servant,

New Prison, SAMUEL NEILSON."

Dublin, 12th Sept. 1798.

The copy of the above was inclosed to you, in the following letter :

MY LORD,

Feeling, in common with my fellow-prisoners, extremely hurt at a publication, which tends to brand our names with infamy, I think it incumbent on me, who commenced the negotiation, to justify our characters and motives, by setting the whole in a true point of view; at the same time, wishing to pay all due respect to government, I trouble you with a copy of the letter, which I mean to send by this night's post. I also take the liberty of sending you the newspaper, with the offensive passages underlined.

I am, &c.

12th Sept. 1798. SAMUEL NEILSON.

(To Lord Castlereagh.)

In a day or two Neilson inclosed the two preceding letters in the following, which he wrote to one of the prisoners of Kilmainham :

MY DEAR FRIEND,

About two hours after I sent the inclosed letters to Lord Castlereagh, Mr. Cooke and a gentleman, whom

whom I did not know, but believe to be Mr. Marsden, called here and sent up for me, I met them. Mr. Cooke had the letter in his hand. "Why, Mr. Neilson, are you losing your judgment altogether?" "No Sir, you took that from me some time ago." "But in earnest will you publish or not?" "I will." "Well then, I am commanded by his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant to tell you, that he will consider its publication an infraction of the whole negotiation, and executions will go on as formerly." "Pray Sir, how is it possible we can let our names go to the world and to posterity, branded with infamy." "I see Mr. Neilson what actuates you, it is a feeling for the honor of your fellow-prisoners and their friends." "It is." "Well, have you no feeling for their lives; for we can convict the most of you." "I do not care this moment you would order me to be hanged." "Very true, but are all the rest of the prisoners of the same opinion?" "I suppose not, but they can never in justice incur the resentment of government for my act." "I once more assure you, it will be considered as an infraction, and we will act accordingly."

Yours, &c.

SAMUEL NEILSON.

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The Septemberizing stile of these menaces,
would astonish in any other country than mine——

———Alas, poor country ;
Almost afraid to know itself ! it cannot
Be called our mother, but our grave ; where nothing,
But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile ;
Where sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rend the air,
Are made, not mark'd ; where violent sorrow seems
A modern ecstacy ; the dead men's knell
Is there scarce ask'd, for whom ; and good men's lives
Expire before the flowers in their caps,
Dying or ere they sicken.

I am now stating facts, by and by I will offer some comments. On the 25th of September I wrote to Lord Cornwallis, demanding the fulfilment of the engagements to which you had pledged him ; after nearly a month had elapsed, on the 21st of October, I received a letter from Mr. Cooke, informing me that we should emigrate to America, and that we should be obliged to give security not to return to Europe. This was the third interpretation of the agreement, a direct violation of the written compact, and totally different from those terms, of which Mr. Cooke had been the bearer ; yet, the very next day, Mr. Marsden came to our prison, to tell us that the whole purport of the letter, we received the day before, was all revoked, and that in a few days, a fifth interpretation would be notified to us by government. After six weeks had elapsed, we received the fifth interpretation of the agreement, in a scrole of your writing,

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brought here by Mr. Marsden, of which the following is a literal copy :

“ Samuel Neilson, Henry Jackson, Arthur O'Connor, Miles Duigenan,
 “ Thomas Ruffel, Matt. Dowling, John Sweeny, John Cormick,
 “ Tho. A. Emmet, John Sweetman, Hugh Wilson, Deane Swift.
 “ W. J. M'Nevin, Joseph Cuthbert, John Chambers.

“ The above persons cannot be liberated at present, the other state prisoners named in the banishment bill, will be permitted to retire to any neutral country on the continent, giving security not to pass into an enemy's country. A pardon conformable to the banishment bill, will be passed previous to their departure. The Lord Lieutenant will be glad to extend this indulgence to the prisoners now excepted, as soon as he can do it consistent with the attention, which he owes to the public safety, and laments that a change of circumstances has rendered the present precaution necessary.” Here all respect for all former conditions is laid by, and a state necessity is made the pretext, which, if admitted as a justifiable plea for breach of engagement, at once destroys every principle of good faith, honor, or justice. Now that I have recited the principal facts, I shall proceed to a recapitulation. Having stated that I forced you to an acknowledgment, that you had no evidence against me, that I demanded a trial upon whatever shadow of evidence you could find, and that you would not grant one.—Having stated that, placed in the excruciating alternative of subjecting myself to be calumniated as one, who had betrayed my countrymen with a view to save my own life, when
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I was really sacrificing myself to save theirs, or, should I decline this, to be calumniated as one who would not consent to devote himself to save his country's blood—driven to this cruel situation by you, and which the critical state of my country obliged me to decide on; in the face of God and of the world I ask you, with what truth, with what justice, with what honor, have you dared to represent me to the world, as a man “who had confessed himself conscious of flagrant and enormous guilt, as one who had expressed contrition, and humbly implored his Majesty's mercy?” Gracious God! Would it not be supposed that a minister, who delivered such facts to a Parliament, and to the world, had some one document, upon which he could found such assertions, which went directly to blast the honor and character of so many men. Nay, will it be believed, that every one of those daring assertions has been made, in direct opposition to every word that was uttered, and every line that was written by these men, who are thus vilely calumniated. I challenge you to produce a syllable that has come from me, verbal or written, which can be tortured into a confession of a consciousness of guilt, an expression of contrition, or any imploring of mercy. Read the memoir I signed and delivered to you, is there a word that can warrant it? So directly is the contrary the truth, that it is expressly set forth in the memoir, that we would never abandon the principles upon which we had acted. When you made these false and daring assertions of *guilt*, *contrition* and *mercy*, had you so

soon forgotten, that you had sent us the memoir to alter, because it contained a vindication of the United Irish, and a condemnation of the ministers, the government and the legislature? Or had you forgotten, that we had refused, in the most positive terms, never to alter a letter? Was it because I requested not to be forced to sign any compact with government, and that I demanded a trial, and that you would not grant it, that you have represented me as one who had most humbly implored his Majesty's mercy? With what truth have you talked of extending mercy to me, or of the gratitude I owe for the mercy I have experienced, when it is a fact you cannot deny, that you forced me to devote myself to procure conditions for others? Ask Mr. Cooke of the diabolical means he has used to procure evidence against me by abusing the name and influence of a relative, to a purpose at which the most unnatural relative would shudder. Ask those underlings, of the enormous sums that have been offered, to supply the place of that evidence you could never obtain. Commence an enquiry into the orders, by which those shots were fired, when I was confined in the Castle; and examine the wife of the gaoler—she will tell you of a third attempt being made, of which her being in child-birth prevented her giving evidence at Maidstone; she will tell you of the money she saw paid, by one of the King's messengers, to the assassin. Are these acts of mercy, for which I am so deeply indebted? When you have considered these facts, read the agreement, and say in what instance does it
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imply a consciousness of guilt, an expression of contrition, or most humbly imploring mercy. But these are not the only instances, in which you stand detected of having dared to advance the most palpable falsehoods. The words in that part of the agreement, which has been committed to writing, are, “and *that they are ready to emigrate to such country as shall be agreed on between them and government,*” with what truth, then, have you informed the parliament, “that *we had humbly implored his Majesty’s pardon, on condition of being transported, banished, or exiled to such foreign country, as to his Majesty shall seem meet.*” When the written compact could so easily be produced to the world, (nay, when it had been published by General Nugent) in which it is expressly conditioned, that the country to which we were to emigrate, should be one mutually agreed on between us and government, is it not astonishing, that any minister could be hardy enough to inform the Parliament, that we had conditioned to be *transported, banished, or exiled to such country as the King shall think meet.* Having fastened those unparalleled falsehoods on their author, I dare you to make your defence. Tell the world how demanding a trial, and a refusal on the part of the government, in a country, *said to be free,* can be construed into *humbly imploring mercy.* Tell the world how the most positive assertion of the firmest adherence to the principles, upon which I had acted, and the most direct refusal to retract a particle of the assertion, can by any force of language be converted into a confession

sion of conscious guilt, or an avowal of contrition. A convict of these unblushing breaches of truth, can it be matter of wonder that you should shudder at publication? Can it be matter of wonder that advanced too far to retreat, and impelled to violate truth in every other particular, you should feel yourself forced to violate the right of publication, for which I so expressly conditioned? Or that irretrievably criminal, and tremblingly alive to detection, you should send Mr. Cooke in Lord Cornwallis's name, with that murderous menace, that if any of the prisoners "should, from a feeling for the honor of their fellow prisoners, their friends, or themselves," attempt to contradict these falsehoods and calumnies, which you had dared to advance, *executions should go on as formerly*. Can the most REGULAR Government, that has ever appeared upon earth, exhibit such another instance of distributive injustice? Is this a part of that clemency, which you say I have experienced? Is this a specimen of that mercy, for which you have asserted I am so much indebted? Deeply as these glaring infractions of every thing that should be dear to a man, who valued his honor, interested you in resisting publication, there were other calumnies, which could never have been attempted to be palmed on the most credulous, had I been allowed to refute them. Had the facts been given to the world, the Minister of England could never have enjoyed those malignant, and scurrilous calumnies, which have been disseminated, here and in England, of the Opposition, who gave evidence on
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my trial at Maidstone, by means of those *Ante-truth*, prostitute prints, upon which such enormous sums are lavished to panegerize corruption, and to assassinate the characters of those who oppose it. Believing, as I do in my soul, that this calumnia-tion of the Opposition of England, has been one of the principal reasons, why the stipulation I made for publication, has been violated with so much injustice and menace, I feel myself peculiarly called on to set forth the truth, in vindicating myself from having given the smallest grounds for these calumnies, which have been propagated, with so much malignity, against men so truly honorable, and so justly revered. I was arrested at Margate, and prosecuted at Maidstone, on a charge of invit-ing the French to an *invasion of England*; to sub-stantiate which a written paper was produced, said to have been found in a great-coat pocket, said to be found in a public-house, in a room in which there was no one, said to be the property of Coigly. This paper purported to come from some secret committee, of whom no account has been given; it contained an invitation to the French to *invade England*, and a most infamous, unmeasured pro-scription of the whole Opposition, as men wholly unfit to be trusted. In order to exculpate my-self from having any concern, in inviting the French to invade a country, of which I was not a native, and where I had been received by thousands of the most distinguished, not only with the greatest hospitality, but with the most affectionate kindness——As the foremost for rank, fortune, talents and virtue were those, against

qualified

whom this infernal paper had denounced this unqualified proscription I called upon them to declare to the world, whether they believed I was that monster, who had attempted to assassinate those venerated characters, that had honored me with their society, blessed me with their friendship, and enlightened me with their instruction. The enormity of the charge was, that I had most basely betrayed these kind benefactors, and to those very men I appealed for my justification. The testimony they bore was, "that they were convinced I was incapable of the diabolical treachery, contained in the paper, with which I was charged; that so far were they from conceiving such perfidy formed any part of my character, that I was of an open, unreserved disposition, and that my principles were those of the Revolution of 1688, which were their own." That I have impeached this testimony since, by what has fallen from me, has been propagated by every perversion of truth, which malignity and falsehood could invent; but these are the mists of the moment, which vanish on the appearance of truth. Deal fairly by those honorable men and by me, I dare you to the test, and, in the presence of God and truth, I call on you to publish the whole of what has come from me, verbal and written; then let me be ranked lower than the lowest, lower than the exposure of these detailed breaches of honor shall rank you in the estimation of every honest man, if, after the publication, those honorable men, who gave evidence at my trial at Maidstone, would not be bound, in truth and justice, to give the same evidence they gave before. Nay,

so

so unequivocally has every word that came from me, since my trial, put it beyond the possibility of doubt, that I was utterly guiltless of every particle of the indictment, that if the whole of what came from me, had been made public as the sun in its meridian, I would defy the most sanguinary of my persecutors, from the man, whose memory is a sponge for every thing that could make for innocence, and an indelible tablet for every malignity that could make against it, to the pampered informer, whose tongue outstrips the office of his ears, and who, when he casts up the ledger of his perjuries in his murderous account, can tell you all he is worth, to adduce a single fact that could stand between me and an acquittal. The first part of this evidence I shall notice, is, that which respects the paper, which contains the unqualified proscription of these great and good men, and the invitation of the French to invade England. In declaring their conviction that I was utterly incapable of thus perfidiously proscribing them, no one can doubt their sincerity. If they could have supposed me to have been capable of such perfidy towards them, they must have been the last men living, who could have found inclination or interest in bearing testimony of my innocence. Will their calumniators assert, that they were convinced I had been to them this perfidious friend, and will they also accuse them of the more than Christian forgiveness, in proving my innocence? Thus calumny itself is driven to admit, that the opposition must have been convinced of my innocence of this

part of the paper, which proscribed and betrayed them. How then was it possible they could conceive that I was guilty of the other part, which invited the French to the invasion of England? Was it in the nature of things that they could believe me to hold one part of the paper in the utmost abhorrence, and approve of the other, and be the author, or have any part in being the bearer of the entire. Thus the contents of this paper, which in fact comprises the whole of the charge in the indictment, if examined with the smallest attention, must carry conviction that the opposition regarded me as one of the last men, who could have been guilty. If, however, there had been any doubt, my examination since, has put it beyond all suspicion. These are my words before the secret committee of the Commons, which I set down to writing the instant I came back to my prison. After stating my having formed the first alliance, that ever existed between the Union and France, in August 1796, and that I had arranged the expedition with General Hoche, which failed in the December following for Ireland, I stated, “ that it
 “ was proposed to me, that a body should be sent
 “ against England, to cause a diversion, and to re-
 “ taliate for the Quiberon expedition. To dissuade
 “ the French from the invasion of England, I * used
 “ every argument in my power, I said from my
 “ knowledge of England, I was certain the best
 “ men in it would be most hostile to any interference

* In the examination I spoke of myself in the third person, but so as to be understood to mean myself, and so the secret committee has taken it.

“ of the French, in the government of their coun-
 “ try, on the same just principle, that they con-
 “ demned the interference of England in the govern-
 “ ment of France, that the state of England and of
 “ Ireland were very different, that in Ireland the peo-
 “ ple were most solicitous to rescue themselves from
 “ foreign and domestic tyranny, but that the majo-
 “ rity of the people of England would be most
 “ adverse to their interference, that many of the
 “ people of England were beginning to see, and to
 “ feel the ruin, which the ministers had brought on
 “ the nation, by engaging in the war, but that if an
 “ invasion was attempted, all consideration of the
 “ injustice of the war would be buried under the im-
 “ mediate consideration of self-defence; that it
 “ would prove the greatest support to an unpopular
 “ ministry, by giving them an unlimited power
 “ over the remaining wealth of England, in any
 “ way they might think fit to take it, while a guinea
 “ could be extorted. These, together with other
 “ arguments, were thought conclusive by those to
 “ whom I addressed them, and the invasion of Eng-
 “ land in 1796 was abandoned.” And again, be-
 fore the secret committee of the Lords, on the 6th of
 September, after pointing out some mis-statements,
 which had been made of the examination I had
 given, as published in the Appendix to the Report,
 on being asked if there was any other inaccuracies
 in the Report, of my examination in this Appen-
 dix, I answered, “ Yes, I have expressly stated,
 “ that the Union had no connexion with the so-
 “ cieties of England and Scotland, and yet my an-
 “ swer is so worded, as if I admitted that some

“ connexion was supported by individuals; this ap-
 “ pears to me to have been done, to give a colour
 “ to that charge, in a paper produced at Maidstone
 “ against me, which states that a delegate from Ire-
 “ land was then sitting with a secret committee of
 “ England, every particle of which I do declare
 “ most solemnly was most false, as I do also declare,
 “ that every part of the indictment, as far as I
 “ was concerned, was wholly unfounded; for so
 “ far was I from seeking an invasion of Eng-
 “ land, that when it was proposed to the Irish ne-
 “ gociator (who formed the first alliance between
 “ Ireland and France) to invade England, and to
 “ retaliate for the Quiberon expedition, he used
 “ every argument in his power to dissuade them,
 “ which I know were conclusive. I state this, be-
 “ cause I find that while I have been imprisoned,
 “ occasion has been taken to calumniate those, who
 “ gave evidence on my trial at Maidstone, and
 “ therefore I wish it to be known, that instead of
 “ my inviting the French to invade England, I pre-
 “ vented it, and I did so, because I knew the best
 “ men there, were as averse to the interference of
 “ the French in England, as they had uniformly
 “ declared themselves to be to the interference of
 “ the English in the government of France.”
 These are faithful extracts of those examinations,
 which, it has been said, impeaches the evidence
 given at Maidstone. Is there one word which can
 warrant such an assertion? Is it in the power of
 language to convey a stronger corroboration of
 their testimony, or a more direct exculpation from
 every part of the charge contained in the indict-
 ment?

ment? Had I not been prevented from refuting these infamous calumnies, the people of England would have been informed, that the man who had been charged with inviting the French to invade them, was the man who averted that event from them, and that he succeeded by stating, how repugnant such an attempt would be to the principles and wishes of those very men, who have been so grossly maligned, and how advantageous it would prove to those ministers (in extracting the wealth of England) who maligned them. Indeed, had I not mentioned these facts by which these calumnies have been so clearly refuted, the absurdity of my being concerned in taking a paper to the Directory of France, by way of credentials, in 1798, who am now known to have formed an alliance with them two years before, in 1796, would alone be sufficient to carry conviction that I could not have had any part or concurrence in this infamous paper; besides without arrogating much credit for composition, or falling into the folly or weakness of overweening, I may express my contempt of the stile of the paper, and I trust every act of my life allows me to express my utter abhorrence of its contents. If then it must be admitted that it is so vile a production—that it was a credential which I could not have wanted, and that, if such a paper could have been of the least use, I could have composed one when I had arrived on the Continent, more to my purpose, none but men determined against the clearest conviction, could believe that I had any part, concurrence, or knowledge of this transaction, upon which the whole of the indictment was founded.

The

The next part of the evidence is that I was of an open, unreserved disposition, and my having been so long and so deeply engaged in the Union, is the ground upon which this has been carped at. Much of my political life is known to the world, enough to enable the public to form its judgment, enough for me to appeal to. From the moment I perceived that my countrymen were willing to sacrifice their religious rancour, on the altar of national freedom, I flung away every other consideration, and exerted every faculty of my soul to dispel the dæmon of discord, and to cherish the spirit of Union. The emancipation and independence of Ireland from internal and external thralldom, were the objects I had in view. So early as 1795, I openly avowed my opinions, as may be seen in what fell from me on the Catholic question; these sentiments are to be found amongst others, “ But if
 “ you shall have convinced the people of Ireland,
 “ that you are traitors to them, and hirelings to an
 “ avaricious, domineering nation, under the out-
 “ ward appearance of a sifter country, if you shall
 “ have convinced the people of this country, that
 “ the free national constitution for which they were
 “ committed, and for which they risked every thing
 “ in 1782, has been destroyed by the bribery of a
 “ British minister, and the unexampled venality of
 “ an Irish Parliament—If you shall have convinc-
 “ ed them, that instead of rising or falling with
 “ England, they are never to rise, but when she is
 “ humbled by adversity, and that they must fall
 “ when she becomes elated by prosperity—If you
 “ shall

“ shall have convinced the people of this country,
 “ that instead of reciprocal advantage, nothing is to
 “ be reaped from their connexion with England,
 “ but supremacy, and aggrandizement on one side,
 “ and a costly venality, injury, insult, degradation,
 “ and poverty on the other, it is human nature,
 “ that you shall have driven the people of this
 “ country to court the alliance of any nation, able
 “ and willing to break the chains of a bondage, not
 “ less galling to their feelings, than restrictive of
 “ their prosperity.” When Union and Reform
 were made treason and death by new laws, agree-
 able to the sentiments I had openly avowed in
 1795, I negotiated that very alliance with France
 in 1796, which I had declared was our only alter-
 native; and when I had returned to Ireland, after
 having formed the alliance, you will find these
 words in my first address to the electors of the
 county of Antrim. “ If the monopoly of the whole
 “ national representation by a few individuals, forms
 “ the basis of *their* constitution, and if the most
 “ profligate sale of that representation to the agents
 “ of another country, be the sole means by which
 “ it is moved and maintained, so far from seeking
 “ your confidence by promising to support it, I
 “ *pledge myself to you and my country, to use every*
 “ *means in my power to effect its destruction.* Ca-
 “ tholic and Protestant are alike convinced, that on
 “ the Union of both, depends the salvation of all.
 “ Those who sell the rights of their country, will
 “ call this by the name of that treason, they live by
 “ committing; but if to promote the Union of
 “ Irishmen

“ Irishmen be treason, if to place the liberties of my
 “ country upon its true republican basis be treason,
 “ then do I glory in being a traitor. It is a treason
 “ I will seal with my blood, and that I hope to
 “ have engraved on my tomb. I know that an at-
 “ tempt on the part of the Executive, to subvert
 “ our liberties, has sanctioned one revolution, and
 “ I feel, that if the Legislative becoming more cor-
 “ rupt than the Executive, should attempt a similar
 “ subversion not only by force but by the more
 “ deadly corruption—they will have sanctioned an-
 “ other.” If these extracts from sentiments spoken
 and published at large, are not sufficient in the cir-
 cumstances, under which I was placed, to entitle
 me to a character for frankness, I refer you to the
 whole of my second address to the electors of the
 county of Antrim, in which I have openly asserted
 the right of forming an alliance with France, and if
 this be not sufficient, I refer you to the State of Ire-
 land I published, in which I have justified resist-
 ance, and calling in foreign assistance. If those
 who read these avowals of my political principles,
 before my trial at Maidstone, before they knew of
 the part I was acting, thought me entitled to the
 character of an open, unreserved disposition, let
 them read those avowals of my opinions and prin-
 ciples now, that the thousand dangers, with which
 I was environed at the time they were written, have
 been made public, would they not be bound, a for-
 tiori, to give me the same character over again?

The last part of the evidence, “ that they looked
 upon me as professing the principles, upon which
 the

the revolution of 1688 was founded," is a matter of opinion. These principles are the right of resisting oppression, and even of calling in foreign aid, in supporting the right; that these were my principles, I appeal to every act and word of my life. If my writings and speeches do not go to the proof, why did not the Crown lawyers produce them? They could have brought evidence to prove they were mine; they found a manuscript copy of my second address to the county of Antrim in my desk, when I was arrested in 1796, and they found two copies of my State of Ireland, when I was arrested at Margate in 1798. The fact then being admitted, how does the general assertion, that these were my principles as given in evidence, bind those who gave it, to any responsibility for the prudence, propriety, or fitness, with which I applied them. That the opposition of England were United Irishmen, or that I made those men, who on a change of ministry must form the administration of England, acquainted with my design of separation, is too absurd to be mentioned by the most malignant calumniator, or to be credited by the most deludable dupe. The charge against me at Maidstone, was wholly confined to England; Ireland or its politics were not mentioned in the indictment. Hence the opposition were, not only not called on to give an opinion, on any transaction relating to Ireland, but, if they had attempted to say a word on the subject, the Judge must have stopped them. In a word, that I have impeached one tittle of the evidence, which was given at Maidstone, by any thing which has come from me,

verbal or written, is so utterly false, that if I was to be tried over again, at this instant, on the former indictment, without subtracting a letter, and that every syllable I have since delivered, was published, so far from retracting any part of the evidence they have given, they would be bound to declare my innocence of the whole charges in positive terms, which they gave only as a matter of opinion before; and as to the part I have acted in my own country, it would be now, as it was at my trial, they would not be called on, or even suffered to give an opinion—nay, if all the reports of the Irish Parliament that ever were printed, with their appendices, were produced in evidence, they would not avail, for this plain reason, neither Ireland nor a particle respecting it are so much as mentioned in the indictment. These remarks on what has fallen from me, as it respects the evidence given at Maidstone, must assure every man who has not shut his mind against all conviction, that nothing ever has, or ever can, consistent with truth, come from me, which can impeach the credit of the great and good men in question. For the part I have taken in my own country, my acts shall be my vouchers; neither the force of foreign mercenaries, nor the corruption of traitors, nor the falshood of ministers, nor the calumny of hired defamers, nor the torture of tyrants can condemn me, as long as conscious integrity finds a place in my heart. Disloyalty, rebellion and treason are confounded, by the mass of mankind, with the success that attends them; whilst with the magnanimous, success conveys no acquittal, nor defeat condemnation. That the constitution

tion *contained* some of the purest principles of liberty, that they have been most violently assailed, that the assailants have been enormously criminal, and that they should be selected for exemplary justice, I have uniformly asserted—then let those vital principles of the constitution, be the standard, and let their violation be the criminal test. I ask but that the world should be informed of the part I have acted; there have been instances of virtue which might challenge the brightest page of the world, there have been crimes which cannot be equalled in the records of Hell, I demand a fair allotment of my share in a just distribution, and with the claims of a calumniated man, I call on my calumniators for publication, not only by the imprescriptible right of self-defence, but by the right of express stipulation. The whole of what has been delivered by me verbal and written, fills one hundred pages, of which only one has been published; publish the ninety-nine which have been suppressed, and when the world are informed of the crimes I have detailed, the criminals I have exposed, and the principles upon which I have acted, then let them judge whether I have had recourse to resistance and to foreign aid, against the constitution, or against racks, tortures, lashings, half-hangings, burning houses, rape, military execution, bastiles, free quarters, and every species of oppression. If these ninety-nine pages contain falsehoods, why have I not been exposed by their being published? If they contain confessions of conscious guilt, contrition, or humbly imploring of mercy, why are they not published? If these pages do not contain un-

answerable charges against the King's ministers, if they contain any thing that can be tortured into their justification, and above all, if they contain a syllable that impeaches the credit of the opposition of England, is it credible that they would not have been published? Give them every line to the world, and if they contain a thought, which the man who loves his species can disclaim, if they contain dereliction of my principles, breach of my engagements, treason to my cause or my country, or perfidy to my friends, let me be overwhelmed by the infamy attendant on instant exposure. You dare not, like the witlefs bird, you hide your head and think you have escaped detection. When it is known that of one hundred pages, ninety-nine have been kept back, are you so weak as to imagine, that any other reason will be assigned, than that your own crimes have made you suppress them? Can the silliest dotard suppose that you have broken your solemn engagements, and held out those septemberizing menaces in Lord Cornwallis's name, to prevent the publication of those ninety-nine pages, if they contained a particle that could criminate me, or impeach the honor of the opposition of England? No, they will surmise the truth, they will be convinced that you have uttered falsehoods, that you have given grounds for calumny, that you have deceived the Parliament, and that you have prostituted the name of a man of honor, to most infamous, murderous menace, and to most dishonorable breaches of the most solemn engagements.

So truly Protean have you been with the state prisoners, from the beginning of this transac-
tion

tion to this instant, that I am wholly at a loss to find any two parts of your conduct, which have any accordance with truth, with each other, or with the agreement. Immediately after we had performed our parts of the conditions, and before a sense of your dishonorable conduct induced you to violate your's, you clearly perceived that by the compact, we had reserved a choice of country for exile, and that we had not excluded ourselves from passing into any country on the globe, that was not at war with Great Britain; you were convinced, that by your own stipulation "that we should not pass into an enemy's country," it is implied that we were to emigrate during the war, while there was a country to come within your exception, nor had you yet forgotten all those professions of liberal construction, good faith and honor, of which you had been so lavish. In this mood you sent Mr. Cooke to our prison, on the 18th of August, with a fair construction of the compact verbal and written, that we were to emigrate to any country, not at war with Great Britain; on the 16th of September you sent Mr. Marsden to inform us, that we should be detained during the war; on the 21st of October you again informed us by Mr. Cooke, that we should emigrate to America, and not be suffered to pass into any other country whatever; on the 22d, the very next day, you sent Mr. Marsden to tell us, we should not be suffered to go to America; on the 5th of December you again sent Mr. Marsden to tell us, that all the state prisoners might emigrate to any country on the continent, not at war with Great Britain, with the exception of fifteen,

teen,

teen, who were to be further detained; and although more than a month has elapsed, since this fifth interpretation of the agreement, and that many of the non-excepted have demanded to be suffered to emigrate, they are still prevented from leaving the prison; and whilst I am writing this letter, it will not surprize me if you should send a sixth interpretation of the agreement, as contradictory to the whole, as those you have sent are to each other. But to what end shall I waste time in reciting any more of your conduct? The man who has shewn a total contempt for truth and good faith in one hundred instances, would betray the same in one thousand. Then setting aside every idea of the existence of the agreement, in which equivalents and terms are set forth; setting aside all those professions of liberal construction and good faith; leaving you to reconcile your plea of necessity with non-performance of compact, for which stipulated equivalents have been religiously paid, I call on you to reconcile those manifold contradictions and prevarications, which have appeared in your various interpretations of the agreement with justice and honor, which can be but one.

You would have been happy, no doubt, that I had implicated Lord Cornwallis and the Parliament, with you in this accusation, but in this you shall find yourself widely mistaken; for much as you have defamed and deceived me, and vilely as you have attempted to furnish grounds for calumny against the opposition of England, your conduct to Lord Cornwallis and the Parliament are not less flagrant.

Detected

Detected of such manifest breaches of truth, in the outset of your ministerial career, the flagrance of your perfidy, forms the strongest evidence, that you are the sole author of those disgraceful transactions, which I have detailed; whilst the unimpeached character for incorruptible integrity, which Lord Cornwallis has uniformly supported, in some of the most trying situations, carries as forcible evidence that he has not debased himself thus suddenly, to so low and so vile a degree; as to the Parliament, you, and you only could have furnished the statements upon which their proceedings were founded; and that you did not lay the written agreement before them, is manifest, from the debate on our advertisement, when some of the members declared, on the second day, that their having seen General Nugent's publication of our agreement, wherein it was stated, that we had stipulated "not to implicate any person whatever by naming or describing," induced them to alter the opinions they had expressed, on the preceding day, when they had not been informed of those conditions. Wholly acquitting Lord Cornwallis, and not interfering in any wise with the Parliament of Ireland, without saying one word of the future, I have accused you in the face of the world, as a minister who has uttered the most gross falsehoods of me; that you have entered into engagements, for the performance of which you have pledged the faith of Lord Cornwallis's administration, and that you have been guilty of the most direct violations of your agreement, attended with all those shifts, subterfuges, contradictions, and prevarications, to which the
 honest

honest man can never be driven, and from which the cunning, pitiful, unprincipled courtier can never be free. I have impeached you of keeping back from the Parliament that written agreement, to which you had pledged the Executive government, and of furnishing the officers of the Crown with materials for a law in violation of the letter and spirit of those very conditions to which you had bound it. I have impeached you for having prostituted the name of a man, whose honor was unquestioned before you had profaned it, by setting it to a menace the most infernal, whether it be considered for its injustice, in attempting to silence men (whose honor you had attacked,) by placing the dagger to their throats to prevent them from justifying their characters by that publication, for which I had expressly conditioned; or whether it be considered for its style of more than Robespierian butchery, in threatening to take the lives of eighty-nine for the *crime* of one, and that no other than the *crime* of exposing your perfidy, and of vindicating their honor. Then let me be that criminal—mark me for your victim; for if to declare to the world that you have most foully belied me, and that these falsehoods have been made the grounds for calumny against the most honorable men, be the forfeit of life—I have no desire to live. If it has come to this, that to contradict the falsehoods of a minister be a capital offence, if every Tyro in office, is to be erected into a Bey or a Bashaw, in these times of blood, life is not worth the keeping. If I cannot live with honor, nay, if I cannot live but loaded with infamy, and to be made the stalking
beast

beast for the assassination of the fair fame of my best benefactors; it is time for me to die. You knew I demanded a trial—you knew I demanded not to be required to sign any agreement, and yet you have told the world that I have *most humbly implored pardon*. You knew I asserted my principles and vindicated the cause I espoused in the worst of times, you knew you had required of me to retract this assertion and vindication, and that I refused to do either; yet you have told the world, “*that I have confessed myself conscious of the most flagrant and enormous guilt, and expressed my contrition.*” You knew that of ninety state prisoners, six only have been examined, that these six have not in the most distant degree *confessed conscious guilt, or contrition, or humbly implored pardon*, and that the eighty-four have never been asked a question; yet you have told the Parliament *that every one* of the ninety have made the like *confessions of guilt, contrition*, and have alike *humbly implored pardon*. You knew that the written compact contained a stipulation that the country to which we were to emigrate “was to be mutually agreed on between us and the government,” yet you have told the Parliament “that we had conditioned to be transported to such foreign country as to the King shall seem meet.” You knew that I had expressly declared that my brother would not enter into any conditions with the government; yet you have first attempted to terrify him into your measures, by sending the very Mute you had sent me, and when this was treated with the contempt it deserved, you took advantage of our separation to try to make him believe that I

had promised he should enter into conditions. You knew that I had expressly conditioned for the right of publishing every part of the information I might give, conformably to my agreement, and also of refuting calumnies; you knew that this right had been recognized by your colleague Mr. Cooke, some time after we made our agreement; yet you have not only violated this important condition, but you have added to the sufferings of a prison, and held out your murderous menace. You knew that you had conditioned that we should emigrate after we had performed our part of the compact, and now that ours has been faithfully discharged, you have set up a plea of necessity, which is equally valid for detaining us for life as for an hour, and equally reconcilable with your contradictory interpretations and shameful prevarications. These are a small part of the catalogue of breaches of faith, honor and truth, of which I accuse you. As to what concerns the written agreement, compare it with the law which you were pledged should be in perfect conformity with its spirit and letter, and for which you were bound to furnish the matter for the Parliament to go by; yet I will submit to be branded for the most infamous liar, if this law is not a most gross violation of the agreement, which the Chancellor declared, "the government that could violate, neither could stand, nor deserved to stand." But though there had not been one of those express stipulations, or those dishonourable infractions, should I have forfeited every right of humanity? Should I have borne with every falshood and every calumny, malice and perfidy have poured out against me? No, I should still retain the imprescriptible
right

right of self-defence, that right with which God and nature have armed every man, and of which no power on earth can deprive him. Let it cost what it may, I will rescue those honorable men from the calumny, for which you have held me out as having furnished the matter. The means which have been hitherto used to dispatch me, leave me no doubt of what I have to expect. The solemn declaration of Coigley (in the presence of persons of the first credit) of the proposal conveyed by the *Reverend* Griffiths, for saving his life, and the giving up mine, gives some idea of the justice I have any hope of obtaining. Abandon those underhand means——spare your murderous menace——send me your Mutes. The same necessity which can justify your detaining me a prisoner for life, will equally justify you for my murder, and infinitely more than for my calumination. The man who has lived in constant habits of intimacy with death for these last three years, had he been the veriest coward, must now be familiar with his most ghastly appearance; not a night that he has not sat perched on my pillow, not a step have I taken that he has not walked by my side, not a thought nor an act that was not directed to what, I was convinced, was the good of my country, and not a thought nor an act that did not forfeit my life, by the code, martial and civil, to which my country has been made subject. My prison is the mansion of death—its inmates in succession are dragged to the gallows—its porch is the scaffold—and the hangman is amongst my attendants; yet you imagine you can infuse terror by your dastardly menace. Do not yourself such injustice, you have not prepared me so ill for

the language of the assassin, or the executioner's gripe. Torn myself from the loved, adored, chosen friends of my heart, is there a fibre that can link the parent to his child, the wife to her husband, children to their parents, or to one another, that I have not seen torn asunder by the ruffian hand of ruthless power, in those different prisons of misery, where I am doomed to pass the vigour of life? Is there an insult you or your underlings have not practised? Is there an alleviation, of which you have not fought to deprive me? One only comfort I had left, I shared the prison of the twin brother of my soul, I shared his sorrows for the sufferings of his loved wife and his eight infant innocents, scattered by marshalled blood-hounds, who have plundered his house, ravaged his demesne, and destroyed his property, one hundred miles distant from the pretext of revolt; when the tear started for his absent, helpless children, or for his beloved country, I could press him to my heart, and wipe away the bitter drops from his manly face, or alleviate his sorrows by making commonage of our feelings, our affections, and our sufferings. This is the brother whose crimes are his talents, his virtues, and love of the people; for whom an acquittal serves but to prolong your cruelties and his persecutions. Bereft of this last, this only comfort I had left, familiarized not only with death, but with its most sublimated horrors, trust me, there is no terror in your threats. Beloved, faithful countrymen, have you, with a fidelity unparalleled in the annals of the world, preserved my life in defiance of torture, that I should drag it along in a dungeon, loaded with chains and infamy, for the
mere

mere sufferance of respiration. You, whose discoloured faces and swollen tongues, hanging from your mouths, scarcely able to receive sustenance for the support of existence, describing the stranglings you have endured more feelingly than eloquence could utter, and you, whose flesh has been torn from your bones by lashings, and torn again before it had been cicatrized, have you borne all (when but to have sighed my name in the ravings of your tortures, you would have been cherished as the favours of your country,) that I should breathe but by the bounty of calumniators.—And you dear, venerated, departed friends, have you taught me by your example, to balance between death and infamy; you have been made exiles from the world; I have submitted to be exiled from our beloved Ireland—let him that loves his country, estimate the difference.

You may imagine that justice has been silenced by the storm, which has raged, and in your triumphant course you may revive the ancient law, which makes the murder of mere Irishmen justifiable homicide: I am indeed a *mere Irishman*, the country knows me to be nothing else: like * Williams and Lawrence, you may confess the fact and plead the CUSTOM, a host of precedents, in six hundred years, will bear you out—but not so fast—returning calm may one day bring the reign of reason back, the man who “smears the sleepy grooms” will

* Sir John Davis cites the records of these two cases, to prove that the murder of the Irish people by the English, was a legal act: Williams confessed the murder, but proved the man he murdered was a mere Irishman—Williams was acquitted,—Lawrence set up the same plea, but it appeared, the man he murdered was an Englishman—Lawrence was hanged.

find "there is no sure foundation set on blood." A few designing villains may delude, they cannot with the like success betray.

At any time, justice to myself and to those venerated men you have attempted to defame, would call for the disclosure I have made; but now, when ministerial confidence has become the wicked and destructive jargon of the day, it is a duty I owe my country to give a true and faithful picture of the honor your ministerial integrity affords. If the time should ever come, when a treacherous advantage of our cruel disunion, might be taken, by a desperate effort to destroy even the shadow of our national independence, and erase this great and powerful island from the list of nations.—If adding insults to injury, equivalents should be talked of for what is beyond all value, and that to dole out as charity the thousand part of rights which God and nature gave us shall be called equivalents.—If enormous burdens should be added, that we shall be told they are meant for our relief, and if in this monstrous project you should hold a ministerial station, let your conduct towards me be the earnest of your conduct to the nation. Let me be banished to the most distant pole, you cannot eradicate the love of country from my heart: Country is my God, upon its altar I could offer up, not only fortune, not only life—I can do more—I can sacrifice revenge. Had the dreadful list of those beloved friends, whom I shall mourn while I live, been greater than it is—had the profusion of my own particular blood, been so abundant that I were left the last of mine own race—did my sufferings
equal,

equal, for exceed they could not, the most excruciating tortures, which have been inflicted throughout all Innisfail—if *the salvation of our island were at stake*, I would stretch out one arm to grasp the bloody hands of my deluded, madened, betrayed countrymen, point the other to our common parent, and in the deliverance of our common country, bury all remembrance of the past; while mutual tears of bitterest grief, sorrow and regret, should wash away all memory, of how all former blood had flowed. Add these to my crimes, and let the exposure of your guilt be one. The more clearly I have depicted you, the more vindictive your revenge. What I value, and which I now defend, is above your reach; power is not tempered to pierce the shield, which honesty can forge—put character upon its trial, no jury can be packed—the patriots who have ever lived are duly summoned to attend, and time records the verdict. The patriots of Greece and Rome, the Ruffels, Sydneys, Hampdens, and Roger Moore, the patriots of Helvetia, of Batavia, of America, have all been branded traitors, in the days they lived; but posterity has done them justice.—Patience, Koskioufko, your beloved Poland has been partitioned by the ruffian robbers, who have shed her blood; justice has but slept—ten years, nay, not five have yet elapsed, “time is the old justice that examines all such offenders.” Character is never fairly before the world until the owner is no more. While I live, though it be within the precincts of the scaffold, I will vindicate my honor, I will raise my voice from the depths of my dungeon, and when I shall have discharged the last debt my country

try can expect, or I can pay—the world will do me justice.

Young Lord, I fought you not, you have grappled with my honor upon these troubled waters; if your's shall have perished, blame your own temerity. Mark but the smallest shade in any charge I have made against you, that is not grounded in the brightest truth, and I will feel more pleasure (if possible) in retracting it, than I have felt pain in travelling through the long and shameful history of your dishonor. Those who know me best, will acquit me of the despondent, gloomy mind, which likes to dwell on human nature's dark, deformed side; whilst those, who know me least and hate me most, shall seek in vain for grounds for defamation. Had your offences been those of folly, of inexperience, of ignorance, or of inordinate presumption, the pompous empty carriage of the man should have ensured your acquittal; but vacant indeed must be the mind that cannot mark the strong and glaring lines, which separate truth from falshood, honor from infamy, and faith from perfidy. Convince me that you are guiltless, that I am in error, and I will do you justice; but with these strong impressions of strong conviction on my mind, I can subscribe myself with no other sentiment, than that which arises from a mixture of pity and contempt.

ARTHUR O'CONNOR.

*From my Prison,
January 4th, 1799.*

